

"I tell you I'm—an officer. I arrest this!"

The words were cut off abruptly by a loud exclamation from Higgins and a crash of glass. Kirk Anthony's face was drenched, his eyes were filled with a stinging liquid; he felt his prisoner sink limply back into his arms and beheld Higgins struggling in the grasp of big Marty Ringold, the foil covered neck of a wine bottle in his fingers.

The foolish fellow had been hovering uncertainly round the edges of the crowd, longing to help his friends and crazily anxious to win glory by some deed of valor.

"I've got him!" he cried joyously. "He's out!"

"Higgins!" Anthony exclaimed sharply. "What the devil!" Then the dead weight in his arms sobbed him like a deluge of ice water.

"You've done it this time," he muttered.

"Good God!" Locke cried. "Let's get away! He's hurt!"

"Here, you!" Anthony shot a command at the speaker that checked him half way across the room. "Ringold, take the door and don't let anybody in or out. We're in bad now. I want Padden." He stepped to the door and signaled a passing waiter. A moment later the proprietor knocked and Ringold admitted him.

"What the—" Padden started at sight of the motionless figure on the floor and, kneeling beside it, made a quick examination, while Anthony explained the circumstances leading up to the assault.

"Thief, eh? I see."

"Is he badly hurt?" queried Locke, bending a pale face upon them.

"Huh! I guess he's due for the hospital," the owner of the Austrian Village announced. "He had his nerve, trying to turn a trick in my place. I thought I knew all the dips, but he's a stranger." With nimble fingers he ran through the fellow's pockets, then continued:

"I'm glad you got him, but you'd better get together and rehearse before the police"—He stopped abruptly once more, then looked up curiously.

"What is it?" questioned the man from Missouri.

Padden pointed silently to the lapel of the fellow's vest, which he had turned back. A nicked badge was pinned upon it. "He's no thief; he's a detective—a plain clothes man!"

The crowd looked nonplused, with the exception of Jefferson Locke, who became calmer than at any time since the waiter had first whispered into his ear.

"We didn't know who he was," he began hurriedly. "You must square it for us, Padden. I don't care what it costs." He extended a bulky roll of banknotes toward the gray haired man. "These boys can't stand this sort of thing and neither can I. I've got to sail at 10 o'clock this morning."

"Looks to me like you've croaked him," said the proprietor, ignoring the proffered money.

"It's worth \$1,000 to me not to miss my boat."

"Wait a minute." Padden emptied the unconscious man's pockets, among other things of some telegrams and a legally folded paper. The latter he opened and scanned swiftly, then turned his little eyes upon Locke without a word, whereupon that gentleman, with equal silence, took from his inside pocket a wallet and selected a bill, the denomination of which he displayed to the proprietor before folding it inside the bundle he held.

"Here! It may cost you something."

CHAPTER II.  
A Gap.

PADDEN nodded and accepted the money, saying:

"Oh, I guess I can fix it. I know the right doctor. But you'll have to keep your traps closed, understand?"

"Will he die?" asked Ringold fearfully, his back still against the door.

"Not a chance. But if he does he'll never know who hit him. You see, we picked him up in the alley and brought him in." Padden winked meaningly.

"It happens right along in this part of town."

"You chaps have done me a big favor tonight," said Locke a little later, when he and his companions were safely out of the Austrian Village, "and I won't forget it either. Now, let's finish the evening the way we began it."

Anderson, Rankin and Burroughs, to conceal their nervousness, pleaded bodily fatigue, while Anthony also declared that he had enjoyed himself sufficiently for one night and intended to go home and to bed. "That episode rather got on my nerves," he acknowledged.

"Mine too," assented Locke. "That's why you mustn't leave me. I just won't let you. Remember, you agreed to see me off."

"S'right, fellows," Higgins joined in. "We agreed to put him aboard and we must do it. Don't break up the party, Kirk."

"I don't want to go home," Ringold muttered.

"It's a breach of hospitality to go home," Higgins insisted. "Besides, after my bloody 'ncounter with that limb of the law I need a stimulant. You must look after me."

Numbed as they were by the excesses of the evening, it did not take the young men long to lose all clear and vivid remembrance of this recent experience, for the time had come when nature was offering her last resistance, and their brains were badly awlri. Of all the four, Jefferson Locke was the only one who retained his wits to the fullest—a circumstance that would have proved him the owner of a remarkably steady head had it not been for the fact that he had continued next week.

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The Sentinel is not in the habit of making premium offers, but when the opportunity came to give such unusual bargains as those presented below, we could not resist. The combination is especially pleasing in that we are able to give with The Sentinel another weekly giving just the news which we do not cover. These offers are open to either new or old subscribers. Premiums will be sent prepaid to any postoffice, with the exception of the dishes. They will be prepaid to stations in Oregon, Washington, Idaho

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